

Resting for software engineers

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The importance of rest

Hacker News is a well known forum for software developers. There are people who criticize it for being pretty brutal and unwelcoming. The essence of it is similar to Reddit and other information aggregating sites. New articles are published daily, and 90% of them concentrate on productivity, process and software engineering.

Very few concentrate on mental side of software engineering. None of them cover resting.

How does one rest from the intellectual work?

When I work on my drum technique, often some problems cripple in. My end is either tense, or angled incorrectly, which at higher tempos of playing snare drum causes issues - pain or general discomfort. This is not specific to drums. Every instrument is the same.

The brain is similar, and what I'll cover here is resting. And how I rest and what prevents me from taking an actual break. Let's start defining what gets us tired, and then move to resting.

Intellectual vs physical work

My uncle is a lawyer. From early on it was clear his job conditions are superior to my father's, who performed what we call a physical work. Working in an air-conditioned office, with tea in one hand and a book in another is a privilege, and we must remember it. This too is how a typical office of a high-tech worker looks like (it might be an open-space warehouse, but still it's better than some physical jobs.) One downside of law, software engineering and other intellectual jobs for that matter is that problems stay with you. It requires some skill to

leave the workspace and forget the issues which existed in that given work day. We often end up processing them even after paid time is over.

Modern jobs and work environments don't help, because instead of targeting silence, focus and deep work, they often target noise, interaction and chaos. You must have heard common complaints of the open-space offices by now several times.

It's not surprising that as these mental essentials have been overlooked, so were other aspects of keeping people efficient. Most notably: the need to be "online" and plugged in, 24/7. To ensure that, employees are incentivized with perks such as:

- corporate cell phone with an unlimited plan
- corporate sponsorship of the fast home Internet connection
- fully loaded laptop

Don't get me wrong - these are perks, and it's great there are there. Yet these are the things that keep you hooked up to issues all the time.

Importance of non-computer hobby

Resting is an important part of staying healthy and productive as a software engineer. When we're working, the brain needs time to process the information we've taken in and to allow us to come up with creative solutions to the problems we're facing. Resting gives the brain a chance to rest and recharge, allowing us to work more effectively when we come back to the task. Additionally, rest can help reduce stress levels, improve focus and concentration, and help with decision making. Resting also allows us to take regular breaks from our work, which helps to prevent burnout and keep us motivated.